United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 19, 2026

Byl Herrmann
Interim President
Amtrak
1 Massachusetts Ave NW
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Mr. Herrmann:

We are writing regarding Amtrak's recent and upcoming changes to its firearm transport policies across its Long-Distance, State Supported, and Northeast Corridor Service Lines. We strongly support Amtrak as America's Railroad and the valuable passenger rail services it provides to millions of customers across the country every year. However, we are concerned by these changing policies and that they could undermine safety.

Since 2009, Amtrak has permitted passengers to transport unloaded firearms and ammunition solely in checked baggage on Long Distance and select State Supported routes that are equipped with checked baggage cars and between Amtrak stations with a ticket office. Passengers choosing to transport these items on those routes have had to follow certain notification and handling requirements, including notifying Amtrak via a phone call at least 24 hours prior to departure that they will be checking firearms and ammunition, completing a two-part Declaration Form at check-in, and locking the unloaded firearm in an approved, hard-sided container which the passenger has the sole possession of the key or the combination to. Before departure, the locked container is then placed in the baggage car by an Amtrak crew member, which is off-limits to passengers.

It is our understanding that pursuant to new grant conditions placed on Amtrak by the United States Department of Transportation in its annual federal grant, made possible by the fiscal year 2026 funding appropriated by Congress, Amtrak is changing its firearm and ammunition handling and notifications requirements to be more lenient and expanding the policies across its service network. First, effective September 1, 2026, Amtrak began to allow the transport of unloaded firearms and ammunition on the Auto Train.[1] Importantly, the unloaded firearms and ammunition must remain locked in the customer's vehicle or motorcycle onboard the train, which is inaccessible to passengers. This means the firearms still cannot be transported as carry-on baggage in the passenger compartments of the train, such as the Coach car or sleeper accommodations. In addition, effective September 1, 2026, Amtrak reduced the pre-departure notification requirement for passengers checking firearms in checked baggage on eligible routes from 24 hours to six hours.

While these recent changes in policies have only impacted routes that offer a separate space for firearms and ammunition to be stored, previous reporting shed light on Amtrak beginning considerations earlier this year to significantly expand these policies to the rest of its trains.[2] Now, based on information

[1] "Firearms in Checked Baggage", Amtrak. https://www.amtrak.com/firearms-in-checked-baggage

provided to Congress and additional recent reporting[3], we understand that in January 2027, Amtrak plans to expand its policies for unloaded firearms and ammunition to be transported by passengers for the very first time to the Northeast Corridor and State Supported Service Lines where there are no checked baggage cars. This unprecedented change will result in Amtrak permitting unloaded firearms and ammunition to be present in passenger cars in carry-on baggage on Amtrak trains that carry millions of passengers a year,[4] such as the Northeast Regional, Keystone Service, and Capitol Corridor. Overall, in fiscal year 2025, Amtrak provided 34.5 million customer trips, of which 15.2 million were on the Northeast Regional and Acela trains, and 14.8 million were on State Supported Services trains.[5] Passengers on these routes who wish to transport an unloaded firearm and ammunition will be required to provide a six-hour pre-departure notification to Amtrak and must present a lockable firearm case that can accommodate two locking mechanisms — one lock supplied by the passenger, and one provided by Amtrak — at a staffed station. The Amtrak lock will be a combination lock set by the station agent, and upon arrival at their final destination, passengers must locate appropriate Amtrak personnel to unlock the Amtrak-provided lock.

We are alarmed by these changes in policies, which seem to be made because of pressure[6] and new arbitrary federal grant conditions, and the increased risks these new policies pose to the safety of passengers aboard Amtrak trains and at stations, as well as front-line workers, including onboard service workers, conductors, station personnel, and law enforcement. Further, introducing firearms, even if unloaded, within passenger cars — without separating passengers from the firearms — would not meet the standards established by the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) for air travel, which, unlike Amtrak, includes strict passenger security screening to board planes[7]. We urge Amtrak to reconsider its plan to allow the transport of unloaded firearms and ammunition as carry-on baggage in passenger cars and request responses to the following questions no later than December 9, 2026.

1. What prompted Amtrak to make these firearm transportation policy changes on each of the service lines (Long-Distance, including the Airo Train, State Supported, and Northeast Corridor Service Lines)?
2. What, if any, issues were the pre-September 1, 2026, policies causing on the Long-Distance and relevant State Supported routes that warranted Amtrak revising its firearm policies for those trains?
3. What, if any, safety and security analysis did Amtrak conduct for the changes that are to take effect in January 2027, for the Northeast Corridor and State Supported Service Lines where there are no checked baggage cars?

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[2] "Amtrak may make it easier to bring guns on its trains," *PBS News*, May 3, 2026, https://www.pbs.org/newshour/nation/amtrak-may-make-it-easier-to-bring-guns-on-its-trains

[3] "Amtrak workers' union denounces plan to let passengers bring guns on trains: 'Sheer lunacy'," The Guardian, November 5, 2026, https://www.theguardian.com/business/2026/nov/05/amtrak-workers-union-passengers-guns

[4] "Amtrak FY25 Ridership", Amtrak. https://media.amtrak.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/FY25-Year-End-Ridership-Fact-Sheet.pdf

[5] "FY 2025 Company Profile", Amtrak. https://www.amtrak.com/content/dam/projects/dotcom/english/public/documents/corporate/nationalfactsheets/Amtrak-Company-Profile-FY2025-043026.pdf

[6] "Amtrak may make it easier to bring guns on its trains," *PBS News*, May 3, 2026, https://www.pbs.org/newshour/nation/amtrak-may-make-it-easier-to-bring-guns-on-its-trains

[7] "Transporting Firearms and Ammunition", Transportation Security Administration. https://www.tsa.gov/travel/transporting-firearms-and-ammunition

4. Has Amtrak conducted a business case analysis regarding customer demand and customer concerns with the changes in policies on each of the service lines? What kind of demand and usage of this policy on the newly eligible routes does Amtrak expect?
5. Did Amtrak consider options for separating passengers and the firearms and ammunition on train routes with no checked baggage service? If so, what were each of the options, and why were they not selected?
6. How would a passenger who wishes to transport a firearm do so if their departure or arrival location is at an unstaffed station?
7. How will Amtrak inform its workers, customers, State Supported route partners, and other transit agencies that operate on Amtrak's network or in its stations about these policy changes?
8. How will Amtrak notify its workers and passengers when a customer is carrying a firearm onboard a passenger car?
9. How will Amtrak ensure that firearm cases used in this process meet TSA standards and that there is not a faulty case or unsecure lock that could make the firearm easily accessible in a passenger car?
10. What considerations has Amtrak made regarding varying state and local firearm laws?
11. In considering all firearm policy changes, what engagement and feedback solicitation did Amtrak conduct with law enforcement and the unions representing onboard service workers, conductors, station personnel, and law enforcement?
12. What training and tools will Amtrak provide to frontline workers and law enforcement to oversee and enforce the new policies on all routes?
13. How many Amtrak Police officers currently ride on Amtrak trains?
14. Will Amtrak need to increase staff, including Amtrak Police, to support the oversight and enforcement of the new policies on all routes?
15. What is the total cost to implement the new policies and what are the funding sources?

Sincerely,

Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator
Ranking Member,
Subcommittee on
Transportation, Housing and
Urban Development, and
Related Agencies

Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator

Jack Reed
United States Senator

Adam B. Schiff
United States Senator

Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator

Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator

Sheldon Whitehouse
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United States Senator

John Fetterman
United States Senator

Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator

Andy Kim
United States Senator

Mark R. Warner
United States Senator

Cory A. Booker
United States Senator

cc: The Honorable Sean Duffy, Secretary, United States Department of Transportation

cc: The Honorable David Fink, Administrator, Federal Railroad Administration